Rethinking Menopause: Hormones, Detox, and the Missing Links to Feeling Like Yourself Again Transcript

(Transcripts are generated by AI and may contain errors)

Introduction to Women's HealthSpan Voices

It's all about kind of reducing your everyday toxic burden, because we're just surrounded by so much toxins in the environment, whether that's food, air, water.

It's just being a little more aware of where the risks are and how to reduce that. So I do have a five-part series. in the podcasts that talk about how to reduce this.

Have you made it past menopause or are you going through it now? I'm Dr. Pat McShane and on the Women's Health Span Voices podcast, I'll guide you through the health challenges of the menopausal years and beyond.

Guiding the way to thriving in this powerful era of your womanhood. Hello and welcome. I'm Dr. Pat McShane and this is Women's HealthSpan Voices and today I have a very special voice with me Dr.

Dr. Julia Ward's Medical Journey

Julia Ward who has a background as a physician and she's going to tell us a little bit about her path and how she got into more of a functional medicine holistic practice via a couple of spots along the way and was practicing primary care when she experienced the fact that many of her patients were coming in with very similar issues and weren't getting helped by the kinds of conventional medicine approaches that she had been trained in.

And then Dr. Julia, maybe you could tell us a little bit about how you transitioned. You can give us more on that background and then how you transitioned into functional medicine.

Yeah, absolutely. Thank you so much for having me. So sort of a non-traditional background. I started off in OB-GYN. I was in the Navy. They paid for medical school.

And then at the time we would go out in the field after internships. and do some time in the field and then come back and do a residency. I ended up not doing the residency for OB-GYN.

I transitioned to anesthesia, but then from there did more primary care. So I was doing mainly primary care work for the bulk of before I started functional medicine.

By the time I was like 45 or 46, I was getting a bit burnt out with feeling like I wasn't making much of a difference, just seeing some of the same things over and over again, just prescribing the medications for the symptoms, and it just seemed to not get much resolution.

But when I started feeling some changes of hormonal transition myself, and I never really had hot flashes or night sweats, my main symptom was fatigue.

And it was just really debilitating fatigue where I would be falling asleep, driving to work in the morning like this. And then this is after a good night's sleep or what I thought was a good night's sleep.

And when I started looking for answers in how I was trained or when I went to my GYN, I just wasn't finding any answers for that. And so I started researching and exploring bioidentical hormone replacement.

And through that, I found functional medicine. And you're still a big vicinity for bioidentical hormones for many, if not most of your patients, I would say, based on our conversations.

Yeah. It's been a total game changer for myself. Once I got on to the correct form of bioidentical hormone, it made all the difference.

From Burnout to Functional Medicine

Like I felt like myself again, I wasn't falling asleep in the middle of the day or in the morning. I felt like I had regular, you know, my energy and my mental clarity back.

So it was for me a huge change. And so that's, you know, I started off mainly doing bioidentical hormones and The more I learned about different aspects in functional medicine, there's just so many little avenues that you can go down with functional medicine.

I think that's the exciting thing. There's always new stuff to learn. Learning about gut health and detoxification, all that was huge as well. And we're going to come back and talk about the toxicity of our everyday life in a couple minutes, but I wanted to just pursue the concept of hormone replacement, bioidentical hormones for a little bit.

Is there an age cutoff after which you would tell a woman who is well into her menopausal years that she should no longer be on hormone replacement therapy?

Or do we not really know the answer to that? would you say? So I treat my patients like I would want to be treated, like I want to treat my family members.

And I don't ever want to say, OK, you've hit this birthday, and so now we have to cut you off. So now the aging process is really going to accelerate.

And so I don't have a cutoff. I feel that women should stay on bioidentical hormones until they decide it's time to stop. But I think there are just so many health benefits to being on them that I wouldn't want to cut that off for myself, and so I don't require my patients to do that.

Yeah, I think that the data is coming in more and more, although it's going to be a while till we know this, I think, confidently, but that there's no automatic cutoff time, and there's even the conditions that we used to consider to be contraindications to certain kinds of hormone replacement.

such as vaginal, such as breast cancer, are going away as reasons to not have somebody on the hormone replacement for their vaginal symptoms often need support for.

What other kinds of things would you say in your practice have you seen with most or many post-menopausal women that you feel like you could help out with?

what kinds of complaints or medical issues. Certainly with, you know, women who are hormonally balanced, have a lot more energy, they're sleeping better, they have less joint pain, they have clearer thinking, they just, they have more sex drive, they just feel better all around.

Memory is better, everything.

Bioidentical Hormones and Menopause Care

That's good to hear. Do you have a lot of women in your practice who have the kind of very conventional medical issues of high blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes and obesity, which I guess are kind of the big four?

Yeah. I do have some, certainly, and I like to work on those issues more from a root cause perspective. If they have diabetes, let's look at the diet, let's clean up their diet and get them on some natural supplements that help regulate blood sugar.

get them moving, you know, that's an important part too. Like, what are you doing with your exercise? And high

blood pressure, you know, same thing. You really have to kind of take a holistic viewpoint.

It's not just, here's your prescription for a blood pressure medicine. It's like, let's look and see why your blood pressure is elevated. We have a special scan in our office called the glyco check.

which is a non-invasive probe that goes under the tongue. It's like a high-powered video microscope. And it looks at the health of the microvasculature, the tiny capillaries that are supplying your tissue, your organs, everything else.

And it's looking at how many of those tiny capillaries are functioning in a square area under your tongue. But it's also looking at the lining that coats the inside of all of our blood vessels called the glycocalyx.

And so these two components, it's amazing the technology of this that it can measure all this, but it puts everything into an overall microvascular health score that we can then, you know, obviously we're measuring and then we can put you on a natural supplement that will help regrow that glycocalyx lining.

And then you can remeasure that, retest that a few months later and see a difference. But just improving somebody's microvascular health score can help normalize their blood pressure.

It can help improve their kidney function. It can help clear up brain fog. So just by increasing, and it makes sense, you increase the blood perfusion everywhere, you're going to get better results and better health.

Absolutely. Yes. And people will feel much better. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. How people feel. So that's one way that you would address the issue of trying to find the root cause of things.

And I imagine another one is just a lot of talking to people about what's going on in their life. Maybe you could tell us a little bit more about that.

Yeah, it's important to get a really detailed health history about what's going on. Everybody has different stressors and different levels of kind of toxic load, if you will.

Here, I'm in the Houston area, and we're in a very humid environment. There's a lot of flooding that goes on, and so consequently, I do see a lot of mold and mycotoxin illness.

and that can really have a major impact on people's health and the issues that they're dealing with.

Root-Cause Approaches to Chronic Conditions

What kind of symptoms are typically associated with the mold exposure? The mold, they can have things like chronic fatigue, brain fog, they can have this mast cell activation syndrome where they're getting a lot of hives and skin rashes that get triggered from a variety of different things that maybe they're chemically sensitive.

So there's just a wide variety of mold illness symptoms like that. We have an extensive health questionnaire specifically for that. We always start with the mold questionnaire that was developed by Dr.

Jill Christa and Dr. Neil Nathan. Can people see you remotely or do they have to travel to the Houston area to see you? As long as they're in the state of Texas, I can see them.

Okay. There's a lot of people in the state of Texas. I don't know about our audience. Let's move over and talk about toxicity and the toxic environment and, you know, that seems to be at the root of a lot of non-specific symptoms that people have.

And you yourself in the Doctor Talks series, and I imagine in your Spotify and iHeart radio iPods or podcasts as well have a series of talks on the toxicity, so people can look into that if they want to go in depth.

But maybe give us kind of the brief, the elevator speech on toxic burden for older people, especially older women.

Yeah, it's all about kind of reducing your everyday toxic burden because we're just surrounded by so much toxins in the environment, whether that's food, air, water.

It's just being a little more aware of where the risks are and how to reduce that. So I do have a five-part series in the podcast that talk about how to reduce this.

So, you know, it's things like making sure that you're drinking filtered water, eating clean organic food, and it doesn't have to all be organic. You know, we have, there's a list of the clean 15, the dirty dozen, that type of a thing that you can do.

It's getting rid of plastics in the kitchen. You know, we used to do a lot of food storage in plastics and now, you know, we've kind of replaced the plastics in our kitchen with either glass.

or wood, but something that's not going to leach microplastics into the food. And air purifiers, are you a big advocate? Air purifiers, yeah, in the home too.

That can make a huge difference. And yeah, we don't realize how much time we actually spend indoors and the indoor air can actually be worse air quality than what's outside.

So air purifiers are really helpful. Yeah. And if we buy a new mattress or bedding or things that are off-gassing chemicals, you know, again, if you're going to do that, you might look online and see how you can prevent some of that exposure as much as possible.

Mold, Toxic Burden, and Detox Support

Yeah. Well, I encourage our audience to pursue that because it's probably very important. I think right now we don't really have good data about the impact of all of this, but I'm sure anecdotally you've had patients who have felt much better when they did something about their toxic burden.

Maybe you could give us a little story about that if you have one on the top of your head. Yes but most of our patients who go through like we have a very gentle kind of detox program that's kind of a modified elimination diet but then also taking some supplements that are helping to open up their detox pathways in the body generally are feeling much better even after just a couple of weeks of being on this.

Yeah that it definitely makes a big difference. I can tell you you know one One lady told me that even just shampooing her carpet and getting the dust out of the carpet made a huge difference with her sinus congestion issues and her allergies.

Yep, we don't think about things like that, but yeah, could make a big difference. And you're not going to find that out with the average medical appointment of 20 minutes, you know.

No, yeah. But if you're in your practice, you probably push people to give you those answers or at least to explore them themselves. So that's good. Yeah, absolutely.

Well, what advice would you have for menopausal women to avoid some of the issues that they come into your office with? I would say if you're experiencing hot flashes and night sweats, it is important to get your hormones measured, see where they are, and look into some bioidentical hormone treatment, whether that's cream therapy or pellet therapy, just something to get those balanced.

But you can also get rid of hot flashes and night sweats just by lowering the sugar in your diet. I had one patient who just went absolutely sugar-free.

and said she completely eliminated her hot flashes and night sweats. Wow. Yeah. So making sure that your diet is, you know, avoiding sugar is really important.

Exercise or movement is really important as well. I feel like the human body was just meant to move. And the minute we stop moving, things just start shutting down, you know?

You really need that movement to keep everything going. Yep. That's how we evolved genetically. We weren't evolved to be sitting in front of our computers or our phones all day long or driving around in our automobiles.

So I totally agree with you. That's kind of the secret sauce to being healthy and to a lot of other pieces of it. It helps our sleep. It helps our stay in the right weight range, et cetera.

So. Yeah, I think I just heard of a recent study where they showed that walking is just as effective as taking like an SSRI. So, you know, why wouldn't you, you know, do something natural like walking because that's going to benefit you physically as well as mentally.

Yeah, and grab a friend on the way out the door if possible. Yeah, being together. Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. Anything else you would like to say to our menopausal audience besides bioidentical hormone at the first sign of issues or getting checked and then consider hormones?

Yeah, we definitely recommend checking out bioidentical hormones. I know that for a lot of women, they think of hormones in a negative connotation like, oh, don't those cause cancer?

Lifestyle Tips for Menopause Health

And I think there's been a lot of misinformation in the past about Traditional hormones which are synthetic coming from, you know, horse urine versus bioidentical, which are chemically identical to what your body produces.

So they're completely different. And the synthetic, you know, horse urine estrogen is, has been shown to be significantly more dangerous. And I think that's where hormones in general get their bad reputation.

And taking something by mouth is a totally different experience for your body than some kind of application on your skin or vaginal, etc. So that's another piece of that whole puzzle, and I agree with you that we've been through.

decades of basically poor treatment for women based on what turns out to have been faulty information to some extent. And also just that what was available for, for hormone replacement at the time is not what we have now.

So times have moved on and I totally agree with you. Yeah. Yeah, even in years past, when you think about the birth control, when the birth control pill first came out back in whatever decade that was, it was significantly higher amount of synthetic estrogen in there.

Taking estrogen in a pill form causes a lot of liver inflammation, which then leads to a lot of side effects. Fortunately, they decreased the dosage over the years, but I think it's still not ideal to be taking estrogen in a pill form.

Yeah, if you have other alternatives that are good. Yeah, yeah, absolutely. Yeah, yeah, excellent. Well, Dr. Julia, this has been wonderful information.

Thank you for filling out pieces of the story for women who are going through menopause and in their menopausal years.

Closing Remarks and Contact Information

And if people would like to get in touch with you, how should they do that? My website is drjuliaward.com. Okay. Great. Yeah. Great. And if you find this kind of information useful, please like and subscribe and tell your friends and give us a review and that will help us to have better recognition in the marketplace out there.

So thank you so much for being with us today and we hope to see you again soon. Thank you. Thank you. Thank

you very much. Thanks for listening to the Women's Health Span Voices podcast.

If today's episode spoke to you, follow the show and share it with a friend ready to take charge of her health and please leave a review. It helps more women find us.